

Death of a Farm

Boyceland Dairy 1946 -1998?



JAMES B. MESSERLY WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT
1020 DEAN BARNARD PARKWAY
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA 30606



The Augusta Chronicle

The South's Oldest Newspaper—Established 1785

Augusta, Ga., Wednesday Morning, October 21, 1981

“
It's something we do because we like it — because it's fun, because it adds a little 'cream' to the dairy business.
”

Bill Boyce

Prize dairy cattle

Sewage sludge from the Augusta/Richmond County wastewater treatment plant is destroying the award winning Boyceland Dairy.

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OVERVIEW

Hugh M. and Henrietta Boyce bought a farm in Burke County in 1946 at the conclusion of WWII. Mr. Boyce sold a portion of the land and used the proceeds to construct and create the dairy farm which continues to operate today. Dairy operations were started in 1948 with the introduction of electricity to rural Burke County. Over the years, the dairy herd has expanded from 20 to over 1,300 head of cattle. The dairy, now under the management of Hugh and Henrietta's son Bill, has approximately 1,100 acres in cultivation and grazing land. Until recently, the Boyceland Dairy was highly successful and consistently recognized as one of the best dairy farms in the southeastern United States.

This business, which is one of the largest agricultural enterprises in Burke County, is family-owned and operated. Four generations of the family depend upon the farm for their livelihood. In addition to the economic necessity of the farm for the family's income, the dairy farm represents an integral part of the fabric of Burke County's agricultural community. Agriculture is the largest business in Burke County and the heart of the economic welfare of the county.

*A typical POTW receives and treats municipal waste. This treatment process theoretically produces sludge rich in organics. However, Augusta and the surrounding area are highly industrialized and industries also discharge wastewater to the POTW for treatment. Therefore, municipal and industrial wastes are treated concurrently by the Augusta POTW. The resulting sewage sludge not only contains organics but also includes industrial by-products, heavy metals and other potentially toxic materials. Historically this sludge was buried in the local landfill.

This 50-year old award-winning family farm is now being destroyed by sewage sludge* placed on the land by the City of Augusta's Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW), known as the Messerly Wastewater Treatment Plant. Beginning in 1986, the City of Augusta (the City), driven by a desire to reduce its costs for disposal of sewage sludge, represented to Boyceland Dairy that the sewage sludge could be used as a risk-free fertilizer. Further, the City represented that it would comply with all laws and at all times evaluate the contents of the sewage sludge generated by what they represented as a state of the art treatment facility. Based upon the City's assurances and Boyceland's knowledge that the nearby McElmurray farm had received sewage sludge for years, Boyceland Dairy agreed to accept sewage sludge on their land.

Despite the City's assurances that the sewage sludge was safe and beneficial, Boyceland Dairy recently began to experience severely declining herd health. Over the years, Boyceland management had questions regarding the potential risks associated with sewage sludge, but at all times, Boyceland Dairy was assured by the City that the sewage sludge was safe and that any problems associated with the sewage sludge could be controlled by the application of lime to the land.



GA Purebred
Outstanding
Breeder
1982
1988

GA DHIR
High Heed
1968
1974
1976
1978
1992
1994

Premier
Breeder
and
Exhibitor
1985
1988

Dixie

Grand Champion at the Augusta Exchange Club Fair for six years and winner of the All Georgia 3-year old Award. Elementary school children touring Boycceland Dairy always wanted to pet and milk Dixie.





The Boyceland Dairy has now uncovered information which shows that the City intentionally led the dairy management to the erroneous belief that the sludging of the farm lands was safe and beneficial. In truth, the City poisoned the land and the animals that depend upon that land with its slipshod and irresponsible management of inherently dangerous sewage sludge.



Typical of what is currently happening to approximately 30% of the Boyceland herd.